Connie Jones Coy

Earns
Master Model Railroader® #763

I Love Trains

I love trains: the real ones that once ran through my birthplace, Wayne, Nebraska, as well as model and toy trains. As a child, I loved hearing the train whistles and bells as we excitedly watched and counted the billboard boxcars, tankers, and gondolas when we were stopped at crossings.

When I was about 8 or 9, my older brother received an American Flyer train set. He liked it, and it looped around our basement for a while. To tell the truth, I played with it more than he did. I even took my Barbie for a gondola ride on several occasions. I don't know what ever happened to that set, but I didn't become interested in building train layouts until much later.

My love of trains continued when I visited Europe and rode the rails in the early 1970s on a student rail pass — what a great way to see everything and ride with the natives! I have ridden the New York City subway and the San Francisco BART. I even rode a small train line from Fort Myers to Port Charlotte when I lived in Florida.

When I was on my honeymoon with my husband (John Coy, MMR#730) in 1991, I learned we were about to become a team of model railroaders. We came across an HO Atlantic Coast Line GP35 in a little hobby shop in Nashville, Indiana. This engine was from a line in the state of Florida.

I said to him: "Isn't this neat? You know, I have always loved trains. I played with my brother's American Flyer more than he ever did." John replied, "I have modeled HO trains since I was 12. I never thought I would do it again. I got rid of my HO stuff a year before I met you."

We had never talked about trains before we were married. We bought this engine on the spot. Our first HO layout was soon to follow, and then two more. We even put an HO loop under our 1992 Christmas tree when we lived in Billings, Montana.

While in Billings, we met several model railroaders and joined the Yellowstone Valley Railroad (YVR) club (a modular group). The club displayed its layout in various locations in Billings. I enjoyed being involved and seeing some of the members' personal layouts.

During our time in Billings, and as we were involved with the YVR, we built a basement layout. I enjoyed creating the scenery, ballasting the track, and assembling kits for water towers, houses, depots, and whatever else we wanted.

I had a real knack for this as I had developed crafting skills in my 20s when I belonged to a craft-of-the-month club. I also learned painting in high school and developed my painting skills years later through watching and trying the various techniques shown on the painting shows offered on the PBS TV network. This skill was very handy for painting backdrops, buildings, rolling stock, and whatever else needed paint/weathering on our Glacier Line.

When we moved back to Indiana in 1996, we built a small layout in the loft of our Avon home (sadly, it had no basement). When our son was 10, we bought him a Lionel O-27 train set for his birthday, hoping to interest him in the hobby. Two years later (2005), we moved into the home we live in today. One major requirement for that home was that it had to have a basement.

We built a layout for our son in a corner of our basement using his Lionel set. We added many Lionel accessories, but our son wasn't interested. However, this layout did give us something to operate while planning and designing an HO layout for ourselves in that basement.

One day, John compared one of our O-scale boxcars to one of our HO boxcars. He immediately knew he wanted to shift to O-scale. John asked me what I thought, expecting me to be upset. He was surprised when I agreed to shift to the larger scale. I enjoyed setting up and running our son's toy layout more than he did (sound familiar?), and I found the larger scale very appealing due to how easy it is to see and handle and how well it stays on track.

As we looked at what was available in O-scale, John and I noticed how realistic the MTH engines were with soundboards and how the smoke poured out of them. We were won over by how realistic the various available brands of O-scale rolling stock and engines looked.

We decided to build our new layout in O-scale and continue to use the realistic modeling and scenery style we were doing in HO. Our O-scale Glacier Line is based on the Great Northern Railway as it journeys around the southern border of Glacier National Park.

However, we wanted to do something completely different and unique. We opted to use three-rail track. We believed that not too many folks would model a prototypical railroad using three-rail track. Our belief paid off, as the Glacier Line has been featured in two professional videos and multiple publications.

The Glacier Line took several years to build. In August 2018, my husband joined the NMRA and became interested in the Modelers' Meets put on by the Central Indiana Division and the camaraderie of fellow model railroaders. He also paid for NMRA memberships for me and several members of our Glacier Line crew. John read about the Achievement Program (AP) and decided to try it. He encouraged us to do so as well.

At first, I thought the AP was a contest and wasn't sure about having my work judged. John explained to me that the AP isn't a contest. It is an educational program designed to help modelers improve their skills. John began to keep track of my volunteer hours and dispatching hours just in case I later decided I wanted to work toward the MMR. Before I knew it, I had earned a couple of Certificates and the Golden Spike. I was hooked.

When our layout was photographed and videotaped for *O Gauge Railroading* magazine, I realized that the scenery I was creating might also earn a certificate.

I wrote articles for the *NMRA Magazine*, took photographs for several articles, and completed the Author's Certificate in January 2020.

With all the time we had during the COVID pandemic, I was able to build cars, earn four Merit Awards, and receive the Cars Certificate (2021). In addition, I put together what was needed to earn the Electrical Certificate, and I also received the Scenery Certificate during that time (2021). I served as Secretary of the Midwest Region and earned the Association Official Certificate in May 2024.

It has been quite a fun journey to do what was needed to earn the MMR. This experience has really helped me hone my skills. I appreciate all I learned about making detailed, realistic-looking rolling stock and scenery. I even bought and learned how to use an airbrush!

I have learned so much at Modelers' Meets on various techniques for building, weathering, and creating scenes on a layout. Seeing others' layouts and involvement in the events, Region meetings, and train shows continues to be such a treat. I am always blown away when I see the creativity and skill of those in this hobby!

John and I still have plenty of rolling stock to weather, which should keep us busy for years. We are also upgrading our buildings. We are in the process of constructing structures that mimic the reality of our prototype area.

When I was near earning MMR No. 763, John began working on a project to

Below Photo: MWR President Bob McGeever Presents MMR Plaque to Connie Coy

link all Master Model Railroaders' names on the official online listing to their respective bios. The purpose is so others may learn more about each respective MMR versus merely reading a name on the official online listing.

During his research, John discovered that I am the twelfth woman to receive an MMR in the history of the NMRA. John and I are the fifth married couple to receive MMRs and the first couple to do so in three-rail. I am the first female three-railer and the fifth overall three-railer to achieve MMR. I am the first woman in the Central Indiana Division and Midwest Region of the NMRA to earn the MMR.

I am thrilled to have earned this distinction from the NMRA and humbled to know that I am somewhat of a pioneer in doing so.

What can I say? I LOVE TRAINS!

(For a 23-minute video of the layout, please Google "The Glacier Line video," and the OGR video productions' video will appear.)

Certificates Earned
Connie Jones Coy, MMR® #763

Model Railroad Author
Master Builder – Scenery
Chief Dispatcher
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Association Volunteer
Master Builder – Cars
Association Official

Above photo: Bob McGeever, Connie Coy, and Dan Banks, Supt. Of Central Indiana Division